

SEP 12 1962

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Donovan Sees Cuba Freeing Captives for Drugs and Food

By STAN KOVEN

James B. Donovan said today he believes Prime Minister Castro is ready to accept a new American bid to break the 16-month-old Cuban prisoner deadlock.

The prisoners' release is "not a question of exchange, not a question of ransom and not a question of tribute," Donovan said.

The 43-year-old New York attorney, who helped to engineer the trade of U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers for Soviet spy Rudolph Abel, discussed his negotiations in Havana with Castro. He returned to this country last week.

Castro is considering a private American offer of "humanitarian essentials"—drugs and food staples—in exchange for 1,113 captives from the abortive April, 1961 invasion, Donovan told a Reform Democratic rally here. He said Castro appears to be taking a more benign attitude toward the prisoners' release because the U. S. government is not a party to the talks.

At Reform Rally

A possibility for the Democratic nomination for the U. S. Senate in New York, Donovan discussed his behind-the-scenes Havana efforts last night at a rally of the Committee for Democratic Voters at the Belmont Plaza Hotel.

From his address, and a later conversation with The Post, it was learned that:

¶ Donovan and two Cuban refugees—Alvaro Sanchez and Dr. Ernest Freyre—were optimistic after five days of talks with Castro and high Cuban government officials.

¶ Donovan will rejoin Sanchez and Freyre, who remained in Cuba, for more talks with Castro "whenever it is appropriate. First there is fund-raising work to be done here."

¶ A new organization with sponsors including leaders of the three major religious faiths and Princess Lee Radziwill, sister-in-law of President Kennedy, has mapped an in-

tensive fund-raising campaign, to start immediately.

Donovan declined to say what factors inspired his optimism. But he stressed that Castro appeared to be often principally because the negotiations were privately conducted and because the negotiators had made telling points. He also pointed out:

"We have changed the basis of the entire swap idea. Americans who contribute will not feel that they are strengthening Castro but assisting the Cuban people, through gifts of necessities for the children, the sick and the elderly."

Other Sponsors

Sixteen months ago, a Castro demand for "tractors-for-prisoners" touched off a nationwide debate. A four-man technical team bargain in Havana but on June 23, Castro rejected its terms.

Donovan listed among his private sponsors the Right Rev. James A. Pike, Episcopal bishop of California; Dr. Louis Finkelstein, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; Richard Cardinal Cushing, archbishop of Boston, and Gen. Lucius Clay, President Kennedy's recent trouble-shooter in Berlin.

Key West, Fla., Sept. 11 (AP) —Havana radio said today two cargo vessels have been attacked by what it called a pirate ship off the northern coast of Cuba.